

An Online Community Evaluation Methodology

TREO Talk Paper

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Abstract

Research suggests that online communities have the potential to play powerful roles in various information systems (IS) areas such as service innovation, knowledge management and sharing, collaboration, e-commerce, and so on. For example Faraj, Jarvenpaa, and Majchrzak (2011) theorize about knowledge collaboration in online communities and Lusch and Nambisan (2015) suggest a perspective of considering an online community as a place of value cocreation in service innovation. While many researchers pay attention to the efficacy of online communities, they seem to assume a mature, well-established or even ideal and perfect online community in their studies.

Few studies, however, focus on evaluating the present status of online communities. Such evaluations would provide information about how to improve online communities in order to take advantage of values these entities should be able to generate. For example, Chiou, Lin, and Perng (2000) studied website evaluation. Unlike website evaluation, which is more focused on usability, both usability and sociability were considered as important aspects for analyzing online community (de Souza and Preece, 2004), however there is little research that suggests specific evaluation criteria for online communities.

In the early 2000s, a startup in South Korea tried something new. It utilized a white paper that defined twelve principles for online community (Typaldos, 2000) and used those principles as the key criteria for defining and evaluating online communities. Its new service, MiniHompy™ became one of the most popular online community services in the mid-2000s. The methodology was useful but has not been the subject of the rigorous academic research unfortunately.

The proposed research will investigate essential factors of online communities and also examine these factors could be used as the evaluation criteria of online communities. Existing studies of online communities including Typaldos's twelve principles will be reviewed. Then the extensibility of an online community will be studied. Online communities seem to have been considered as one function of web services, nonetheless hypothetically online communities could be one specific type of ecosystem created by mobile apps, the Internet of things, and so on. Hence the proposed research will provide another perspective of virtual community itself as well as enhance our understanding of novel spaces being created as information communication technology has advanced.

References

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